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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted (1) to identify the methods used by land-grant institutions to increase the career awareness of home economics majors and (2) to identify the specific minors, options, or emphasis areas that are being implemented at these institutions to increase the career alternatives of home economics education majors. A questionnaire was sent to the head home economics educator at 67 land-grant institutions in the United States, with a return of 82 percent (69 percent usable). The results of the survey indicated that 50 percent of the 1982-83 home economics education majors secured teaching positions following graduation, and 8.2 percent secured positions with the Cooperative Extension Service. Head teacher educators at two-thirds of the institutions reported that their programs were not designed to prepare home economics education majors to enter positions other than teaching and/or the cooperative Education Service. The other third indicated that their programs primarily included preparation for employment in business or community and adult education, and/or gerontology practice. Methods used to inform students of career alternatives were advising, guest speakers, student organizations, career reports, brochures, interviewing home economists, observations, and placement services. The study concluded that students are still attracted to home economics education programs for the primary purpose of being prepared to teach, and that teaching, along with the Cooperative Extension Service, is what the programs are preparing them to do. (KC)

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PREPARATION OF UNDERGRADUATE HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION MAJORS FOR CAREER ALTERNATIVES

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PREPARATION OF UNDERGRADUATE HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION MAJORS FOR CAREER ALTERNATIVES

There have been several studies in the past two years that contributed to information on career alternatives. These studies include; Rossman, Parsons, and Holman. "Career Alternatives for Home Economics Educators"; Dohner. "Career Alternatives for Home Economics Education Graduates"; Hall, Wallace, and Lee. "Characteristics of Faculty, Students, and Programs".

(Insert Table 1) The purpose of this study was two-fold: (1) to identify the methods used by land-grant institutions to increase the career awareness of home economics education majors and (2) to identify the specific minors, options, or emphasis areas that are being implemented at land-grant institutions to increase the career alternatives of home economics education majors. A questionnaire was sent to the head home economics educator at 67 land-grant institutions in the continental United States. Fifty-five (82%) of the questionnaires were returned. Nine (17%) questionnaires were unusable because the institutions did not offer a degree program in home economics education. Therefore, forty-six (69%) of the returned questionnaires were used in the actual data analysis.

RESULTS

In order to develop a demographic profile of home economics education at land-grant institutions in the continental United States the following information was collected. Twenty-six (49%) of the respondents reported having a university student enrollment of over 15,000. (Insert Table 2) The results of the survey indicated that the current student population taking courses in the home economics unit of the reporting institutions ranged from less than 100 to over 1000.

At the 46 institutions offering a degree in home economics education, the average number of students majoring in home economics education at the time of the study was 39.3 per institution. (Insert Table 3) The number of students who graduated with a bachelor's degree in home economics education declined from an average of 19.11 per institution in 1978 to an average of 11.5 per institution in 1983.

Of the 1982-83 home economics education majors, 50% secured teaching positions following graduation, and 8.2% secured positions with the Cooperative Extension Service. Thirty-three (63.5%) of the institutions reported that a master's degree was not required for employment with the Cooperative Extension Service in their state.

Head teacher educators at 31 (67.4%) of the institutions reported that their programs were not specifically designed to

prepare home economics education majors to enter positions other than teaching and/or the Cooperative Extension Service. Fifteen (32%) of the respondents indicated that their programs were so designed. These programs primarily included preparation for employment in business or community, opportunities in adult education, and/or gerontology practica.

(Insert Table 4) In order of frequency, the methods used to inform students of career alternatives were advising, guest speakers, student organizations, career reports, brochures/flyers, interviewing home economists, observations, and placement services. Of those responding, 15 (32%) cited other methods which were utilized in informing students of career options. These methods included orientation courses, career exploration seminars, internships, slide presentations, bulletin boards, career day, displays, and professional meetings.

(Insert Table 5) Of the various positions which attracted home economics education majors, teaching was ranked first, having attracted 50% of the students soon after graduation in 1983. The Cooperative Extension Service was ranked second, followed by business and graduate school, which were a close third and fourth respectively. In rank order, the other career fields that attracted the graduates were human services, goverenment services, full-time homemaking, and research.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the conclusions of this study cannot be generalized beyond home economics education programs at land-grant institutions, the findings may have implications for similar programs at other institutions. According to Harper's study in 1981, the field of home economics education is facing an oversupply of teachers while simultaneously coping with declining enrollments in teacher education programs. This study documents the decline at land-grant institutions. As stated by Bertha G. King, considering current trends in education nationwide, it is speculated that this decline in enrollment may continue a few more years before leveling off. If the decline does continue, it is anticipated that some programs will be discontinued.

Findings from this study revealed that half of the 1982-83 home economics education graduates found employment in teaching following graduation. This finding suggests that students are still attracted to home economics education programs for the primary purpose of preparing to teach. The majority of the respondents reported that their programs were not specifically designed to prepare home economics education majors to enter positions other than teaching and/or with the Cooperative Extension Service. It can be concluded, therefore, that with few exceptions, home economics educators responsible for program planning continue to be committed to the original objective of

their programs: to prepare home economics teachers and cooperative extension agents. Home economics educators appear to prefer to concentrate on doing "what they do best" rather than diversifying and/or diluting their programs.

TABLE 1

Objectives

1. To identify the methods used by land-grant institutions to increase the career awareness of home economics education majors;

2. To identify the specific minors, options, or emphasis areas that are being implemented at land-grant institutions to increase the career alternatives of home economics education majors;

Table 2

Home Economics Student Enrollments in Land-Grant Institutions

Home Economics Enrollment	Number of Institutions	Percentage
Less than 100	8	17.4
100 - 250	8	17.4
250 - 400	7	15.2
400 - 550	4	8.7
550 - 700	2	4.3
700 - 850	8	17.4
850 - 1000	2	4.3
Over 1000	7	15.2
Total	46	100.0

Table 3

Students Graduating from Land-Grant Institutions
With a Bachelor's Degree in Home Economics Education

Academic Year	Total Graduates	$\bar{x}$
1978 - 1979	822	19.1
1979 - 1980	783	17.8
1980 - 1981	634	14.4
1981 - 1982	619	13.8
1982 - 1983	518	11.5

N = 46

Table 4

Methods Used to Inform Students of Career Alternatives

Method	Rank	Frequency	Percentage
Advising	1	43	93.5
Guest Speakers	2	33	71.7
Student Organizations	3	30	65.2
Career Reporting	4	26	56.5
Brochures	5	24	52.2
Interviewing	6	21	45.7
Observations	7	19	41.3
Placement Services	8	18	39.1
Other	9	15	32.6
College Catalog	10	14	30.4

N = 46

Table 5

Positions that Attracted Home Economics Education Graduates Following Graduation

Position	$\bar{x}$ Rank	Rank Order
Education	1.15	1
Cooperative Extension	3.28	2
Business	3.73	3
Graduate School	3.87	4
Human Services	4.31	5
Government Services	5.44	6
Homemaking (unpaid)	5.80	7
Research	7.53	8

Note. Respondents ranked the positions from 1 (position attracting the highest percentage of graduates to 8 (position attracting the lowest percentage of graduates).